

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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Beadle's Frontier Series

By Denis R. Rogers



DIME NOVEL SKETCHES NO. 179

BOYS' BOOKS OF ROMANCE AND ADVENTURE

Publisher: Beadle & Adams, 98 William St., New York, New York. Issues: 21. Dates: March 20, 1874 to December 31, 1874. Schedule of Issue: Every two weeks. Size: 9x5½. Pages: 36 to 64 pages. Price: 10c. Illustrations: Pictorial cover stencilled in color. Contents: Frontier stories reprinted from earlier Beadle publications.

Beadle's Frontier Series

By Denis R. Rogers

Between February 5, 1908 and January 14, 1910 M. J. Ivers & Company reprinted, under the above series title, one hundred tales, which had been published originally by George Munro or Beadle & Adams.

The many alterations of the original authors' names for these reprints, made apparently without rhyme or reason, have long irritated students of dime novel pen names. This article attempts a logical explanation for those alterations.

First it was necessary to classify the sources of the original tales. The result was found to be 10 reprinted from Beadle and 90 from Munro. The next point noted was that Ivers used NAME authors throughout the series. Evidently, however, no attempt was made to relate the names chosen for the Beadle's Frontier Series with the true author, for only a few tales have the correct by-line.

A plausible explanation for the names chosen is that Ivers selected them with an eye to variety and to the popularity of such authors as E. Z. C. Judson (Ned Buntline) and Prentiss Ingraham. This would be a complete solution to the riddle of the Beadle's Frontier Series authors, were it not that seven of the 54 name authors were altered. The seven changes were:

- 56 Ned Buntline for L. Augustus Jones (55 Munro's Ten Cent Novels)
- 64 R. L. Wheeler for Capt. Latham C. Carleton (62 Munro's Ten Cent N.)
- 71 W. J. Hamilton for Samuel Fletcher (99 Munro's Ten Cent Novels)
- 75 R. L. Wheeler for L. Augustus Jones (50 Munro's Ten Cent Novels)
- 78 Prentiss Ingraham for George Robinson (87 Munro's Ten Cent Nov.)
- 92 Capt. F. Whittaker for Capt. Latham C. Carleton (92 Munro's Ten C.)
- 98 R. L. Wheeler for J. C. Chase (80 Munro's Ten Cent Novels)

From a name point of view the changes make no sense. For example L. Augustus probably was a real author and, even if a pen name, the link through R. L. Wheeler would make Ned Buntline a pseudonym of Frederick Whittaker! Moreover, Capt. Latham C. Carleton was, in fact, a nom de plume of Edward S. Ellis and not of Whittaker. R. L. Wheeler is a mystery name, which may have been used for Beadle's Frontier Series only, and both Judson and Ingraham rarely, if ever, wrote for George Munro.

Reverting to the variety and popularity theory, it seemed significant that the first change of a name author did not occur until No. 56 of Beadle's Frontier Series. Incidentally all the 10 reprints from Beadle were of name authors and no names were changed.

The final step was a tabulation of the whole series by authors, as follows: Capt. Latham C. Carleton, 14 titles; Samuel Fletcher, 11 titles; R. L. Wheeler and Capt. Frederick Whittaker, 8 titles each; W. J. Hamilton and Col. Prentiss Ingraham, 7 titles; L. Augustus Jones and Arthur L. Meserve, 6

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titles; Ned Buntline, 5 titles; J. Milton Hoffman and Edward L. Wheeler, 3 titles; and 18 authors with one or two titles.

Two important facts were established by this tabulation. The first was that nearly three quarters of Beadle's Frontier Series (72 numbers to be precise) are attributed to only nine authors. The second was that ALL the 43 author changes were allocated between eight of those nine authors.

To sum up, Ivers first decided to use only name authors for Beadle's Frontier Series. Then, changing the 36 by-lines who were not originally name authors, he appears to have aimed at combining variety with popularity by concentrating on nine names. The seven other changes took place after more than half the series had been published and so were probably made to balance the allocations to each of the chief authors.

Of course this is just theory and it is up to the individual reader to decide how far he accepts it, if at all. However, it is clear that Beadle's Frontier Series must be regarded as unsuitable source material for dime novel pen name investigators. Whether a Beadle's Frontier Series reprint "verifies" or "disproves" ownership of a particular pseudonym, it should be resolutely ignored.

Two distinct cover formats were used for Beadle's Frontier Series. The first, used for the majority of the hundred issues, has a colored illustration occupying the bottom three quarters of the wrapper. This picture has no border except at the top. There a black line separates the picture from the remaining quarter of the cover, which contains the title and other data in black and colored letters on a colored background. The background color varies—red, yellow, purple, green, etc.

Up to about No. 70 the series title appeared above that of the novel itself. Thereafter the position was reversed. The words: "Issued Weekly" at the top of the page, together with the number of the novel at the top left and the price (5 cents) at top right, completed the lettering.

In a few issues the title is superimposed on a rectangular block of the same color as the title lettering, but patterned with thin horizontal black lines across its length. Some issues have the author's name on the cover

The second distinct format also has the cover divided between the illustration (three quarters) and the title, etc. (one quarter). In this case, however, both sections are framed and they are separated by a strip of the white cover paper. The frame of the illustration is a single thin line; that of the lettering has a thick outer line and then up to half-a-dozen thin lines. The novel title appears over the series title and the number and price are at bottom instead of top left and right respectively. The coloring of the format is pastel, as against the full-blooded hues used for the majority format. Moreover the lettering is on a white background.

All the spines have the title in the center and the number at both top and bottom. Cover designs have no relation to the plots of the novels, in fact the same picture was used once or twice for two different issues (e.g., 61 and 85; 69 and 94). The size varied from 4¼x7 to 5x7¼. The paper and printing are both execrable.

The probable publication dates are to be found on the back wrapper. While publication was weekly, announcements were made in batches of eight at a time. The dates for numbers 81 to 100 had to be estimated, owing to non-availability of Ivers editions after No. 80. The estimated dates are enclosed in brackets.

A few issues have the author's name on the wrapper, but not on the title

page. As it is possible for wrappers to become detached—this often happened when dime novels were bound—the numbers concerned have been marked with an asterisk against the author's name. It will be noted that all the seven numbers are towards the end of the series.

Beadle's Frontier Series was reprinted about 1912 by The Arthur Westbrook Company of Cleveland, Ohio. Except for the publisher's name on the title page and a few minor variations in the two cover formats, the Ivers and Westbrook editions are identical.

Only a few Westbrook issues retain the words: Issued Weekly. Those few were probably due to carelessness, since it is believed that the Westbrook reprints were issued en bloc. Westbrook raised the price to 10 cents a volume, which may explain why no price is shown on most of their front wrappers. The title section of the second format has a pastel pink background, instead of being left white.

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